

Delaware Will Issue March Food Benefits on March 4 to Reduce Hardships

NEW CASTLE (Feb. 12, 2019) – To reduce hardships on families and individuals, Delaware will issue March food benefits to all SNAP households on March 4, rather than staggering them across a three-week period.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits will be loaded onto clients' Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards on March 4, ensuring a timely issuance of food benefits to the more than 136,000 Delawareans who count on the SNAP program to feed themselves and their families, said Ray Fitzgerald, director of the Department of Health and Social Services' Division of Social Services (DSS). DSS manages the federal food benefit program in Delaware.

DSS typically staggers food benefit issuance between the second and 23rd day of each month. Delaware, along with many other states, issued February benefits on Jan. 17 because of the partial federal government shutdown. Issuing March benefits on the normal schedule would have left some people with up to 64 days between receipt of SNAP dollars.

"It is imperative to do what we can to make sure individuals and families who receive food benefits are not going hungry because benefits are being issued on different dates," said Dr. Kara Odom Walker, DHSS Cabinet Secretary. "We know the children, seniors and people with disabilities who make up the majority of SNAP clients depend on these benefits each month."

Clients will be notified of the early issuance through letters to each household, contacts through retail outlets and community partners, social media posts, and other means.

The Division of Social Services has notified grocery and convenience stores of the March 4 issuance date for SNAP benefits, so they can stock additional food items and increase staffing as needed, Fitzgerald said. The division also is working to get the message out to community partners, including legislators, State Service Centers, the Food Bank of Delaware, senior centers, places of worship and other community organizations.

“We are doing everything we can to make sure the benefits are issued in a timely way and the community is aware of this latest change,” said Fitzgerald, who noted how important food benefits are to the working poor. “Many SNAP clients are working, but the jobs they have do not pay enough to support a family. These benefits, no matter how small the amount, are an important part of their monthly food budget.”

The average household benefit in Delaware is \$238 per month, which makes the total disbursement about \$15.8 million monthly. Clients in Delaware who have questions about the balances on their EBT cards can check them online at ConnectEBT.com or call Conduent Customer Service at 1-800-526-9099.